

# Supervisors, neighbors ask for cleanup

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*Warminster wants  
the former Naval Air  
Warfare Center  
cleaned of  
contamination  
and submitted a  
194-signature petition  
from residents.*

BY HARRY YANOSHAK  
Staff Writer

WARMINSTER — Supervisors displeased with the cleanup at a polluted three-acre chunk of the former Naval Air Warfare Center now have 194 people behind them.

They signed a petition that Warminster's Parks and Recreation Department sent to the Navy last week, parks director Karen Whitney said.

The petition argues the public

deserves a complete cleanup, not the partial one that the Navy coordinated with help from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

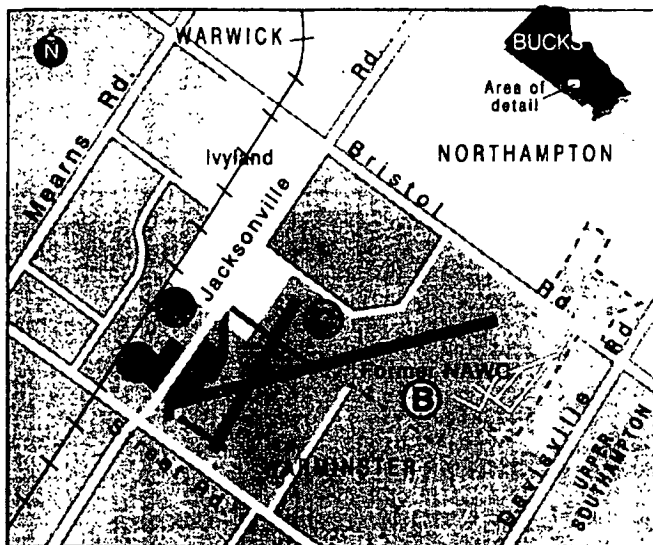
The Navy reports it dumped paints and solvents at the center from 1960 to 1980 and also dumped treated sewage from 1950 to 1955. Contractors in 1997 removed chemical-laden dirt, construction debris and household trash, but their work hasn't satisfied the elected supervisors.

Board members cut the three acres from a plan to transform a large piece of the former base into a park.

The base, a former aviation and navigation research center and former training ground for the nation's first astronauts, is situated in Warminster, Northampton and Ivyland. Closed since 1997, the mothballed base is government surplus that the Navy intends to unload.

Part of Northampton's piece will be used for a new elementary school. Warminster's revised plan is to transform 239 acres into a park. The taxpayer-supported

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- Fourteen wells were connected to the treatment plant last summer.
- Ⓑ The Navy said it has removed all contaminated soil. Warminster wants the Navy to continue ground water monitoring and a three-acre region to a tougher standard.
- Ⓒ Well water located here is sent to a treatment plant.
- Eight wells were connected to the treatment plant last summer.

## Cleanup

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Federal Lands Reuse Authority of Bucks County intends to redevelop another 259 acres in Warminster into a business complex. Ivyland will use its share for homes and a few businesses.

The base is a federal Superfund site. Other larger areas of contamination are found west of Jacksonville Road in Warminster around several former research buildings. Pollutants include the suspected cancer-causing solvent trichloroethene, a degreaser known as TCE, in well water; also metallic compounds locked in the dirt, paints, trash and wastes laden with cancer-causing polychlorinated biphenols, or PCBs.

As of last year, the government had spent about \$17 million on the cleanup, the bulk of it spent to build a water treatment plant, drill wells and remove contaminated soil.

The U.S. Department of Defense estimates the cleanup will cost another \$16.3 million and continue through 2029.

The polluted site in question neighbors the Shenandoah Woods military housing complex. The Navy labels it clean enough for a park but not clean enough for houses or another development that requires digging. A Navy report recommends spending \$225,429 to place a two-foot soil cap on the contaminated area and

label it off limits to shovels. Anyone digging there would have to wear special clothing, what supervisors call the "moon suits" worn around chemical spills.

Board members and those who signed the petition want the Navy to take the most expensive route, spend \$10.6 million, explore for more pollution and remove it.

Tom Ames, an engineer who's the Navy's environmental cleanup coordinator for the base, said the government would consider the public comments against the Navy's recommended plan. A decision should be ready by April, he said.

In its petition, Warminster accuses the Navy of making a "conscious decision to put the health, safety and welfare of our children at risk."

The cost is minimal when compared with the defense budget or the cost of a single airplane, the petition said.

Each Grumman F-14 "Tomcat" fighter, for instance, costs the Navy \$38 million, according to the Department of Defense. That's almost four times what it would cost the Navy to render the site pollution-free.

Supervisor William Goldsworthy said the last time Warminster insisted the Navy perform a thorough cleanup, contractors uncovered 55-gallon drums and contaminated soil from a site west of Jacksonville Road.

"We're telling them to just dig the crap out of there."